

Advocacy for Scientists

Five Tips for Sustained Action

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Scientists are the experts that scientists rely on for shaping policy. Combining expertise and personal narrative with sustained action, you can be a powerful force for change. Use these five tips as guidance during AWIS' Public Policy and Advocacy Week and throughout the year to get started.

1. Shirk the Myth of Objectivity

Too often scientists are taught they ought not engage in advocacy to preserve "objectivity" in their field. The farce of objectivity is strongly held by privileged groups who outwardly reject social justice concepts; however, it also has a choke-hold on well-intentioned scientists who fear advocacy will take away from their scientific or professional merit. We must overcome the myth of objectivity and elevate scientists who seek to advocate for science if we are to overcome threats to science funding, climate resiliency, and equity in science. An important part of advocacy work for scientists is helping to establish cultural norms that promote scientists' engagement in decision-making processes.

Ideas for Action

- Chapter discussion groups on this article
- Create chapter mentoring circles.

2. Leverage Your Power at Every Angle

Your local, state, and national elected officials were elected to serve you. You have power! Communicate your expectations in all levels of government if you are a U.S. citizen and can vote. Remember to engage with elected officials besides just those in the U.S. Congress; your state legislature may also be making important decisions on key issues such as university funding, and your local council may be addressing climate resiliency, for example.

Ideas for Action

- Hold a chapter Hill Day in your state capitol
- Invite your city council members to visit your lab or chapter event.

3. Make One Major Point – With Narrative

Know your pitch and practice it. In less than three minutes, you should be able to concisely identify your issue, explain the root cause(s), articulate the urgency of the issue, and describe your personal connection.

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Make One Major Point – With Narrative *continued*

Your personal narrative is essential, not only because storytelling makes us more effective communicators, but also because your elected officials are most invested in issues they know are directly impacting their voters.

Ideas for Action

- Hold meetings with your U.S. Senators and Representative with 2-5 chapter members
- Write letters/postcards to your local, state, and U.S. elected officials
- Publish an op-ed in news outlets

4. Demonstrate – and Don't Stop

Demonstrations like marches and rallies offer tremendous value in community building and awareness raising. While worthwhile, they may lack specific goals and immediate outcomes. After rallying support with your colleagues at demonstrations, don't forget to reconnect on ways you can keep the momentum going. In addition to demonstrating for issues you care about, diversify your advocacy toolkit by applying pressure directly to your elected officials.

Ideas for Action

- Convene demonstration participants for debrief sessions
- Communicate your call to action with your elected officials and media.

5. Be Mindful

Activism can be emotionally and physically exhausting, yet it is essential that we sustain our efforts as political processes take time. Audre Lorde said, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Caring for yourself is an insistence that you matter and are worthy of care despite systems of inequality. To sustain your activism, it is a great idea to engage with mental health and wellness resources, alleviate stress with the help of peers and mentors, and spend time on introspection.

Ideas for Action

- Share locally-specific mental health and mindfulness resources with your chapter
- Practice mindfulness meditations.

Learn more about using advocacy at AWIS' Advocacy Action Center at www.awis.org/advocacy

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